

Our Common Birds

BY

D. W. HAMILTON, Ph.D., B.S.A.,

*Lecturer in Nature-Study and Elementary Agriculture,
Macdonald College, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, P. Q.*



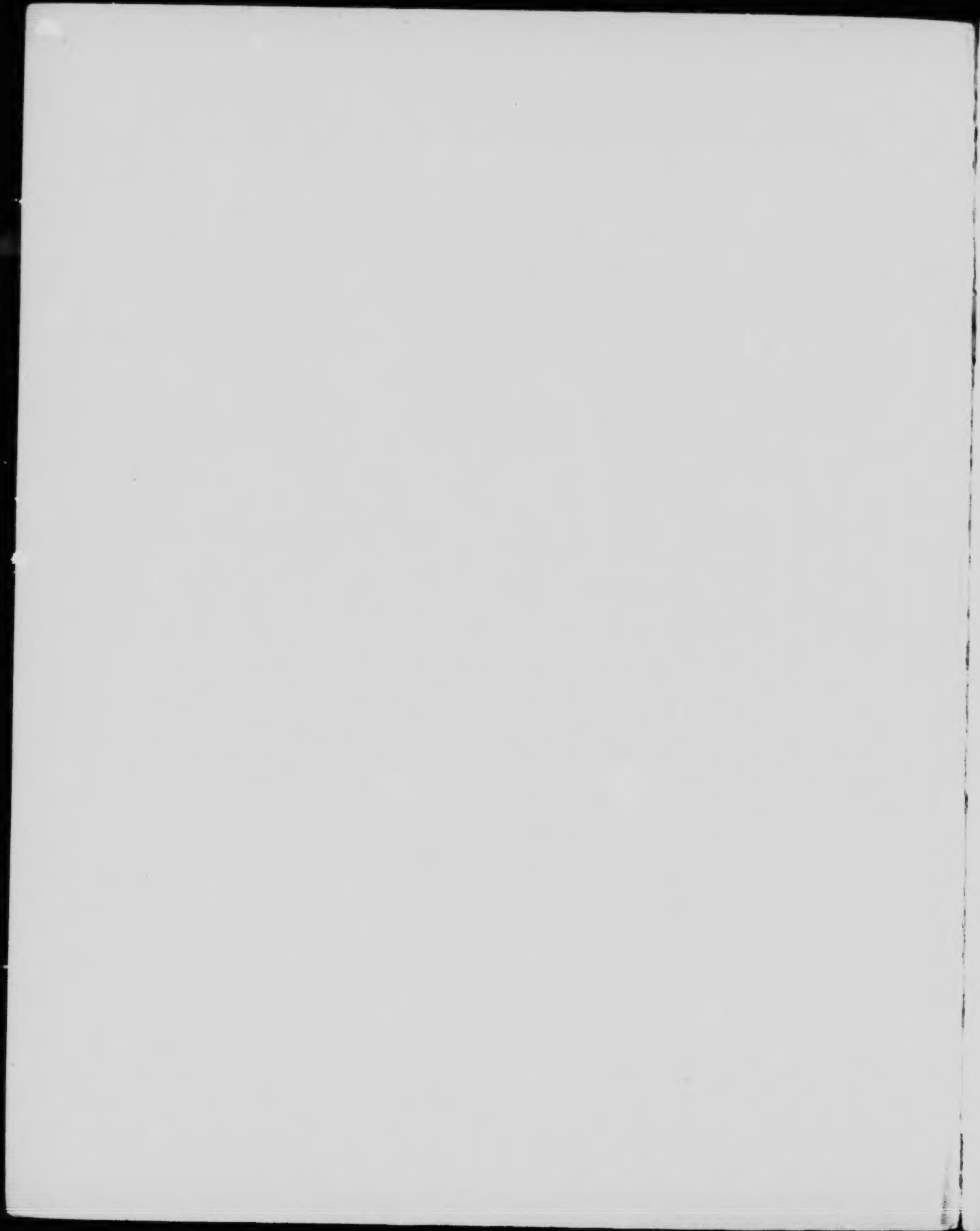
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Nature Study Lessons

—By—

G. A. CORNISH, B. A.

*Lecturer in Science, Faculty of Education,
University of Toronto.*

ILLUSTRATED

Thirty-one—Bird Studies—Thirty-one

Based on the classroom work of the author—Embracing:
BIRDS, BIRD FOOD, BEAKS, CLAWS, EGGS AND MIGRATION

One-half Leather, \$1.50; Cloth, \$1.00.

The following extract from the author's introduction explains the purpose and the scope of the lessons:—

Birds have always been the favorite topics of nature study work in the public schools. The methods used have not always been above criticism. The chief aim in teaching the pupil these lessons is to develop an interest in bird life. The only way to develop this real and vital interest is by getting the pupil to observe the common birds in their natural habitat. The purpose of this little book is to assist in this useful work. Thirty topics have been selected which cover all departments of bird study. Those chosen for treatment are the birds that are easy to find, and suitable for observations by school children. Not only have individual birds been dealt with, but other topics, such as bird food, the beaks, the eggs and migration have been covered. Each bird selected is typical of a large number. I have felt that it is much better to treat a small number fully than to give a smattering of a large number.

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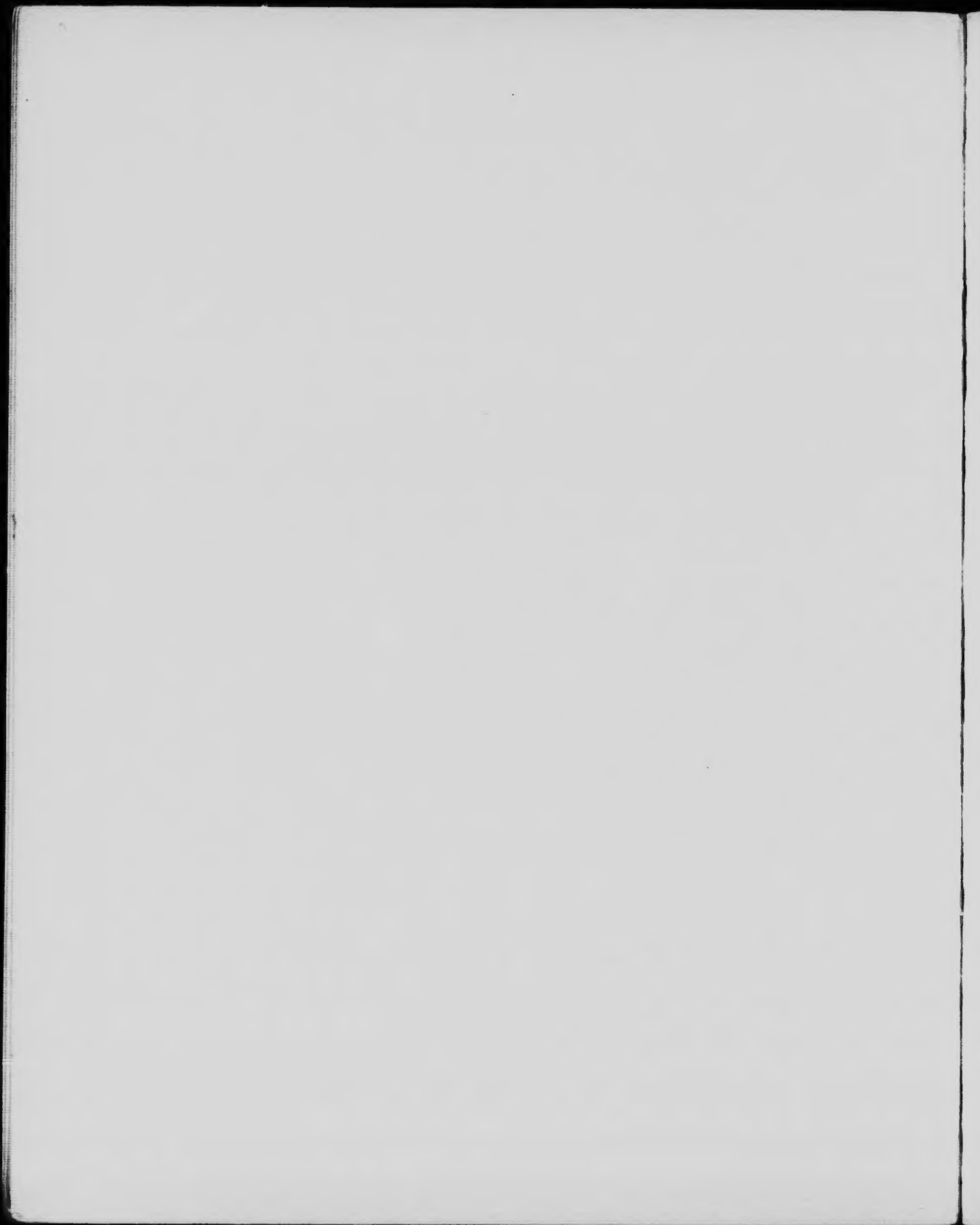
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CANADA



PREFACE

"The robin and the bluebird piping loud,
Filled all the blossoming orchards with their glee;
The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud
Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be;
And hungry crows, assembled in a crowd,
Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,
Knowing who hears the raven's cry, and said,
'Give us, O Lord, this day our daily bread.'
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er caught,
Whose habitations in the tree-tops even,
Are half-way houses on the way to heaven."

"We shall see more and more clearly in time that when we get the higher, finer, and more enduring life (to which all must grow), we shall have the greatest possible inducement to give the trees, plants, birds, animals, and all other expressions of the Infinite their lives and their fullest liberty. We shall be compelled to love them. What we really love we cannot abuse, kill, or enslave."

THE NATURE STUDENT'S CREED.

I believe in outdoor recreation. I have a sincere desire to become more and more acquainted with the objects of Nature.

The pursuit of Nature Study should lead me into verdant meadows, through serene woodlands, or perchance along an unfrequented roadside, or to the bank of a sparkling stream, where the various objects of Nature are least disturbed—where the wild-flowers unfold their beauty—where the music of birds charms the ear, and the air is redolent with the fragrance of the wild rose, and the perfumes of the forest pines.

I believe that such excursions, made with the purpose of discov-

ering something of interest and importance, will tend to make me more observant, more appreciative, more thoughtful, and withal, more happy, and will enrich my memory, enabling me to give fuller expression to my thoughts.

My interest in Nature Study is intensified by a realization of its economic importance. I believe it is my duty to become able to distinguish the beneficial from the harmful objects of Nature, to the end that I may protect and encourage the former.

Among the many objects for Nature Study, the birds occupy a most interesting and important place. I believe it is my duty to give expression to my sympathy and appreciation of them. I delight to see their many colored costumes—to note the richness of the varied hues of their plumage. They are the open-air musicians, who sing because they are happy; they are the never-tiring entertainers and the unpaid helpers of man. The birds are the natural enemy to vast numbers of injurious insects, which, unchecked, would multiply so rapidly that they would soon become a devastating host, a plague, rendering the earth unproductive and hence uninhabitable.

I can best encourage and protect the birds by seeking to create sympathy for them in the minds of the youth, by bringing their importance to the attention of my friends who might otherwise disturb them, and by advocating laws for their protection. I can further protect and encourage them by building bird-houses for their occupancy, and by feeding them in winter, when their natural food is scarce.

Trees are also among the important topics for Nature Study. I appreciate the trees, both on account of their beauty and their value. I advocate the conservation of our inestimable forests and I am interested to know the various trees of our land, to be able to distinguish them, and to know their value. Without trees, this beautiful land would seem cheerless, and we would be deprived of many comforts we now enjoy.

The flowers, minerals, animals and all other Nature Study topics are of interest to me, because I firmly believe that frequent observations of the beauties of Nature all about me will have a wholesome effect upon my life.

W. O. McINDOO.

Toronto, Sept. 2, 1915.

Our Common Birds

*A light broke in upon my soul—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased—and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard.*

—BYRON.

Many birds are found in every section of North America. Most birds nest at the northern limit of migration. In the warmer sections of Canada about two dozen are permanent residents, and a dozen or more are winter visitants. The great majority of these Canadian summer residents arrive from southern United States, the West Indies, and Central America in spring and early summer and leave for those warm regions when cold nights foretell the approach of winter.

GAME BIRDS

The *Ruffed Grouse* or *Partridge* is one of the most common among the permanent northern residents. It, and other related species is a game bird protected part of the year by the game laws. It is a bird about eighteen inches long with upper parts chiefly brown, variegated with black, gray, and white; large tufts of broad glossy, black feathers on the neck; and under parts chiefly white, tinged with buff and barred with blackish or grayish brown. The tail-feathers vary from gray to brown and are irregularly barred and mottled with black, with a broad dark band near the end. When the tail is spread it presents a beautiful, fan-like appearance. Of all the characteristics of this superb game bird, its habit of drumming is the most remarkable. The sound is produced by the male bird beating the air with his wings as he stands firmly braced on some favorite low perch. It is the call to his lady mate who approaches the old rendezvous, shy, but responsive. The same perch may be used by the old male year after year. On the ground at the base of a stump or tree, or beneath brush, the nest is made. It may contain eight to fourteen pale yellowish-brown eggs about one and one-half inches long and an inch broad. The young can run about as soon as they are hatched, and

when one week old can fly well. During summer and autumn the grouse eats insects, berries, and seeds, and in winter, leaves and buds. To keep itself warm during cold nights in winter it burrows into a snow-drift and there passes the night. Sportsmen delight in hunting the ruffed grouse, and its flesh is much prized at the table.

The *Canada Grouse* or *Spruce Partridge* is a common inhabitant of northern coniferous forests. It has more feathers on the legs, but the toes are bare. The throat is black, and separated from the black breast by a broken circular band of black and white. The tail is black, tipped with brown. Its eggs are larger than those of the ruffed grouse, and are more or less speckled or spotted with deep brown.

Bob-White belongs to the Grouse family. He is only about ten inches long. The male in winter has upper parts varying from reddish-brown to chestnut; a black band on the upper breast; the throat and a broad line from the bill over the eye white; the lower breast and belly white barred with black, and an ashy-gray tail. On the ground in grassy fields, the female lays ten to eighteen white eggs about one inch broad. It is found only in the warmer sections of eastern Canada, but is more common in the United States.

BIRDS OF PREY.

Hawks, Owls, and Eagles are large birds of prey. The former make raids upon the poultry yard, and always prefer feathered game to any other.

The *Sharp-shinned Hawk* and *Cooper's Hawk* are those which often attack poultry. They are both small but possess great boldness and dexterity. The former is about one foot long with upper parts slaty-gray; primaries barred with blackish; white throat streaked with black; under parts barred with white and buff, and an ashy-gray, nearly square tail with blackish cross-bars and whitish tip.

Cooper's Hawk is very similar but larger, and with the crown blackish. They build nests in trees, fifteen to fifty feet above the ground, and lay three to six bluish-white eggs about two inches long. Because of its larger size *Cooper's Hawk* is more destructive to poultry. They are fearless, daring, aggressive; and watching their prey from a lookout, then flying swiftly and low, they make a sudden dash at the frightened animal, and grasp it in their talons. They are often called "hen hawks" and "chicken hawks."

The *Red-tailed Hawk*, and the *Red-shouldered Hawk* also have the latter names applied to them. Both of these like chickens. The former is about twenty inches long with upper parts brownish; upper breast heavily streaked with grayish-brown; the upper belly streaked, spotted or barred with black, forming a kind of broken band across the belly; the lower belly generally white; the tail rich brown, with a narrow black band near its end, and a white tip. The *Red-shouldered Hawk* is about the same size, with conspicuous reddish-brown "shoulder" patches, and a blackish tail with four or five white cross-bars and a white tip. Both are common species, but give little trouble to the farmer, though unjustly blamed for the sins of their bird-killing relations. They live chiefly on mice, moles, frogs and insects. The hawks already described are permanent residents in most parts of Canada and the United States.

The *American Goshawk* is a bird of northern regions, wintering as far south as Virginia. This is one of the most daring of all hawks, and will dart down suddenly and carry off a chicken which may be only a few feet from a person. It is nearly two feet long, with upper parts bluish-slate color, a blackish head, and the breast and belly barred pale-slate and white, with sharp black streaks. It nests in trees, and lays two to five white eggs faintly

marked with pale brownish. This hawk is so large and powerful that it is quite capable of killing and carrying off a full-grown hen.

The *Marsh Hawk* is often seen gracefully skimming over the low meadows, or occasionally hanging poised over one spot for a second or two and then dropping down into the long grass. This drop may mean the death of a mouse or a frog. It seldom attacks a domestic fowl, but destroys an enormous number of field mice each year. The male has gray or ashy upper parts, silvery-gray tail, irregularly barred with black, and lower breast and belly white with bars or spots of rufous. It lays four to six dullish-white eggs on the ground in marshes.

The *Broad-winged Hawk* is the most unsuspicious of all hawks, and is chiefly distinguished from other species by the three "notched" primaries, and its smaller size. It breeds throughout eastern North America. During early summer it may be seen for hours sitting on the dead top of some high tree. It feeds chiefly on mice, reptiles and insects.

The *American Rough-legged Hawk*, a large species characterized by feathered tarsi, and heavily marked under parts, breeds in Canada and winters in the United States. It is somewhat nocturnal in habits, and may be seen in the fading twilight watching from some low perch or beating with measured, noiseless flight over its hunting ground. Its flight is seldom rapid, and often appears labored.

The *Pigeon Hawk* has slaty-blue upper parts, a rusty collar on the neck, three or four distinct grayish-white bars on the tail, and under parts of cream-buff or yellow streaked with black except on the throat. It nests in trees or on cliffs, and lives chiefly on small birds.

The *American Sparrow Hawk* is less than one foot long, with a brownish back more or less barred with black, slaty-blue head, under parts chiefly cream-buff, and belly and sides spotted with black. It breeds as far north as Hudson Bay and winters in the southern States. Its call is a high, quickly repeated "killy-killy-killy-killy;" and, as the name suggests, it lives on small bird, mammals and insects.

The *Fish Hawk* or *American Osprey* is a common species. It has upper parts, head and nape brownish, varied with white, and white under parts. This species lives in colonies or in pairs, along the coasts, and returns year after year to the same nesting ground. Its note is a high, rapidly repeated, plaintive whistle. It is a good fisher. Winging its way slowly over the water, it keeps a close

watch for fish. When one is observed, it hovers for a moment, then descends with rapid speed and directness, strikes the water with great force, making a loud splash, frequently disappears for a moment, then rises with its prey grasped in its powerful talons, and flies to a favorite perch.

The *Golden Eagle* is of rare occurrence east of the Mississippi, but the *Bald Eagle* breeds throughout North America. Its head, neck, and tail are white, and the rest of the plumage brownish. They live chiefly near water and subsist principally on fish. The nest is found in tall trees, and contains two or three dullish-white eggs nearly three inches long.

Owls are found in all parts of the world, and about twenty species inhabit North America. They are chiefly woodland birds, while some make their home in towers or outbuildings. Owls are birds of prey, and birds of the night, living chiefly on small mammals. They have weird, human voices, and are usually regarded with superstitious fear. Their eggs are uniformly white and unmarked. Only a few most common species will be described.

The *Long-eared Owl* has conspicuous ear-tufts an inch or more in length, upper parts brownish mottled with white, a tail with six or eight cross-bars, and sides and belly irregularly barred with brown. It spends the day in the shade of evergreens. "Like other owls, its flight is slow and wavering, but in common with them it is buoyant and devoid of any appearance of heaviness. The note is said by some to resemble the noise made by kittens, while others state it is like the barking of small dogs."

The *Barred* or *Hoot Owl* has no ear-tufts. The upper parts are grayish-brown, the under parts white, the breast barred, and the sides and belly broadly streaked with fuscous. The deep-toned, questioning voice, the absence of "horns," and the dark-brown, nearly black eyes, combine to make barred owls appear strangely human. Their usual call is a sonorous "whoo-whoo-whoo" uttered during the first part of the night and again before sunrise, or on moonlight nights throughout the night.

The *Saw-whet Owl* is only about eight inches long. Its upper parts are cinnamon-brown, the back spotted with white, the tail marked with three or four imperfect white bars; the under parts white, heavily streaked with cinnamon-brown, and the legs and feet feathered

and buffy-white. It nests in a hole in a tree. During the day it frequents dark woods, and sleeps so soundly that often it may be captured alive.

The *Screech Owl* is known by its small size and ear-tufts when seen; and when night comes, by its tremulous, wailing whistle—a weird, melancholy call welcomed by few. It frequently makes its home near dwellings, and may nest in them. Its favorite retreat is an old apple orchard where the hollow limbs offer it refuge by day from smaller birds which may attack it.

The *Great Horned Owl* is nearly two feet long and has conspicuous ear-tufts nearly two inches long. The upper parts are mottled with varying shades of buff and black; there is a white patch on the throat, and the under parts are a yellow-buff barred with black. The legs and feet are feathered, and the eyes are yellow. This owl is common in wild, unsettled, wooded regions, and is very fond of rabbits. Its call is a loud, piercing, blood-curdling scream.

The *Snowy Owl* is a bird of cold, northern regions, but may wander southward in winter. It is large, without ear-tufts, and white in color, with bars of grayish-brown. The legs and feet are heavily feathered, and the eyes are yellow. Its flight is firm, smooth, and noiseless. It is diurnal in its habits, and is most active during the early morning and again before dusk.

The *Hawk Owl* is also diurnal in habits, and its flight is swift and hawklike. It breeds in northern regions and comes south in winter. The size is medium; the upper parts grayish-brown; the head and neck spotted with white; the under parts barred with brown and white, and the tail long and rounded.

COLOR KEY TO THE WOODPECKERS

- 1A. No red on the head or nape.
 - 1B. Under parts black, without streaks or spots.
 - 1C. Outer tail-feathers barred with black—1. *Downy Woodpecker* (F)
 - 2C. Outer tail-feathers white, without black bars—2. *Hairy Woodpecker* (F)
 - 2B. Under parts with black spots, bars, or streaks.
 - 1C. Back entirely black—3. *Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker*.
 - 2C. Back black and white.
 - 1D. Outer tail-feathers entirely white; crown yellow or spotted with white—4. *American Three-toed Woodpecker* (F)
 - 2D. Outer tail-feathers black, with generally a narrow white margin; rump white—5. *Red-headed Woodpecker* (F)
 - 3D. Outer tail-feathers black and white; a large black patch on the breast—6. *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* (F)
- 2A. Whole top of head red.
 - 1B. Throat red.
 - 1C. Belly yellowish; end wing-feathers spotted with white—6. *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* (M)
 - 2C. Belly and rump white; end wing-feathers black—5. *Red-headed Woodpecker* (M)
 - 2B. Throat white.
 - 1C. Breast and belly black—7. *Pileated Woodpecker* (M)
 - 2C. Breast black or blackish; sides streaked; belly yellowish-white—6. *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* (F)
 - 3C. Under parts tinged with red, without streaks or spots—8. *Red-bellied Woodpecker* (M)
- 3A. Crown black, brown, or gray, with a red band across the nape, and a red crest on the back of the head.
 - 1B. Under parts black; bill blackish—7. *Pileated Woodpecker* (F)
 - 2B. Under parts more or less spotted and streaked with black; a black patch on the breast; throat brown; rump white—6. *Flicker* (M or F)

NOTE:—F=Female; M=Male.

THE BIRD WITH A CHISEL BEAK.

Woodpeckers, of several species, are common both in Canada and the United States. As a rule they are solitary, and they are the best climbers among all birds. Two toes of each foot are directed forward and two backward, except in one group; and this structure of the feet, together with the pointed, stiffened tail-feathers, assists them in clinging to upright surfaces. The bill is stout and chisel-like, and is used to cut away wood and reach grubs which are drawn out of their hiding places by the long tongue with its horny tip. Woodpeckers nest in hollowed-out places in dead trees, and lay white eggs.

The *Hairy Woodpecker* is a most common species. It is about ten inches long, with black upper parts, white under parts, wings spotted with white, and a white stripe above and another below the eye. The adult male has a scarlet patch on the back of the neck.

The *Downy Woodpecker* is very similar in color and markings except that in the latter the outer tail-feathers are white barred with black, and in the former they are white without bars. The Downy is shorter and the feathers more downy and fluffy. This is the smallest and the best known of all our woodpeckers. He visits the orchard and shade trees, and tells of his presence by the tap, tap, tap, on the trees as he patiently digs out grubs and larvae. The valuable work done by these birds for the protection of our trees should commend them to every nurseryman. The toughest cocoon ever spun by a caterpillar is no protection against the sharp beaks of these birds. The food of both sexes consists almost entirely of insects, with the seeds of the hemlock or the berries of the sumach for dessert.

The *Red-headed Woodpecker*, with the head, neck and upper breast deep red, the lower breast and belly white, and the upper parts and the tail black except the white rump and white patches on the wings, is the most beautiful bird of this family. The Downy and the Hairy are winter residents, as far north as central Canada, but the Red-headed is only a visitant in northern regions, and migrates southward in the autumn. They are noisy, active birds; and their brilliant plumage and loud, rolling call make them conspicuous. In early spring they feed on insects, which they catch on the wing; but after the small fruits ripen their tastes change, and they visit the strawberry and raspberry patches.

The *Golden-winged Woodpecker* has more colors and more names than any other bird. A few of its forty names are *Flicker*, *High-hole*, and *Yellow-hammer*; and these names are the reflections of its habits, notes and colors. The top of the head is a sky gray; across the neck is a bright scarlet band; upper parts are brownish-gray, barred with black; the sides of the head, throat and upper breast are yellowish-brown; a broad black stripe on either side of the throat runs backward from the base of the bill; a broad black crescent spans the breast; the under parts are white tinged with yellow, and the tail is black above, and yellow tipped with black below. The *Flicker* is a bird of character and does not always follow the habits of the family. It does less woodpecking than any other of its class, and is really a ground feeder, living chiefly on grasshoppers and other ground insects.

The *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* is another woodpecker. The adult male has a crimson crown and chin, black and white wing coverts and back, wings black with a large white bar, black tail breast black edged with yellowish and the under parts dull yellowish with white sides streaked with black. It is a small woodpecker, and prefers sap to insects. In spring when the sap is rising it bores small holes in the bark of various trees, and sucks the sap which flows from the holes. Apart from this habit, which results in making young trees somewhat unsightly, the bird has an excellent record. It devours great numbers of ants, beetles, and moths which it obtains chiefly from rotten wood. It is a summer resident only in Canada, and winters in the United States.

The *Pileated Woodpecker*, known as the "King of the Woods," is about seventeen inches long, and is the largest of our woodpeckers. The male has a scarlet crown and throat and a red mark extending back from the bill. The upper and under parts are brownish-black, and a broad white stripe extends from the bill backwards, on either side, to the wings. This bird is common only in the wilder parts of the country. Its flight is rather slow, and when under way the markings of the wings show plainly.

The *Arctic Three-toed* and the *American Three-toed*, as the names suggest, have only three toes on each foot, two in front and one behind. They are restless, active birds of northern regions, spending their time generally in the topmost branches of trees.

TREE INSPECTORS

The *Nuthatches* are closely related to the woodpeckers. Two species, the White-breasted and the Red-breasted, are northern resident species frequently seen around cultivated lands in the winter. They are active insect destroyers, picking their food from bark, twigs and leaves; and are of great value to the fruit-grower because of the immense quantities of insect eggs and larvae which they destroy. Their call is a nasal "yank-yank" and a repeated "ya-ya," all in the same tone.

The *White-breasted Nuthatch* is about six inches long, with a bluish-black crown, slate upper parts, white under parts, and a short tail.

The *Red-breasted* has the top of the head and a wide stripe through the eye, shining black, a white line over the eye, the upper parts bluish-gray, the throat white, and the under parts reddish-brown. Few birds are more easily identified. As they run up and down trees they assume attitudes which no other birds attempt; and in their inverted positions they give occasional utterance to the loud, nasal "yank."

Chickadees are permanent residents of Canada and northern United States and are also insect-eating birds. They closely inspect the bark of trees for insect eggs and larvae. The *Carolina Chickadee* is found in southern United States. It is distinguishable by having no white edges to the wing feather.

*"Were it not for me,
Said a chickadee,
Not a single flower on earth would be;
For under the ground they soundly sleep,
And never venture an upward peep,
Till they hear from me,
Chickadee-dec-dee."*

The *Black-capped Chickadee* is a small, fluffy bird with top of head, nape and throat, shining black, the sides of the head and neck white, the back ashy, the breast white, with belly and sides washed with cream-buff. It builds a nest of moss, grass and feathers in old stumps, and lays five to eight small white eggs, spotted and speckled at the larger end with brown.

The *Hudsonian Chickadee* has a dull, dark, brownish-gray crown. No bird speaks its name so plainly as a chickadee and no bird has more friends because he is sociable with all. In an unconcerned way he hops from limb to limb, whistling softly the while, picking an insect egg from this crevice in the bark and a larva from another, all the time performing acrobatic feats. After satisfying his appetite, he looks at the onlooker with his sparkling black eyes, speaks to him in liquid gurgles, and then flies away to the woods. They become so tame in winter time that they come about the house for food, and may be induced to perch on the hand.

The *Brown Creeper* is another small bird which, like the chickadee, searches for insects, eggs, and larvae which are hidden in crevices of bark. He starts at the bottom of the trunk and winds his way upward in a near-sighted manner. Having reached the top of his spiral staircase he suddenly drops to the base of another tree and resumes his task. The upper parts are mixed brown and white, the rump pale brown, the tail grayish-brown, with feathers stiffened and pointed, and the under parts white. It builds its nest in the loose bark of a tree and lays five to eight spotted and speckled eggs.

*"Although I'm a bird, I give you my word
That seldom you'll know me to fly;
For I have a notion about locomotion,
The little Brown Creeper am I,
Dear little Brown Creeper am I.*

*"Beginning below, I search as I go
The trunk and the limbs of a tree,
For a fly or a slug, a beetle or bug;
They're better than candy for me,
Far better than candy for me."*

THE TANAGER.

The *Scarlet Tanager* is the *Bird of Paradise* in the northern regions of North America. The male is bright scarlet, with black wings and tail. Unfortunately it is not common as far north as Canada, but occasionally breeds in the warmer sections. Its song is a loud, cheery carol, suggesting the song of the robin. These beautiful birds are found in open woods, parks or orchards. They live on seeds, berries and insects.

THE WILY BIRD

A Crow can speak for himself, and is well known to Canadian and American children. He is about twenty inches long, and black all over. The farmer is well acquainted with his corn-pulling habit, from which even the "scare-crow" does not frighten him. Sometimes he is guilty of destroying the eggs and young of small birds. On the other hand he does much good by destroying injurious insects, mice and other rodents, and is valuable occasionally as a scavenger. He seems to rejoice in being an outlaw. He knows no fear and laughs at attempts to entrap him. For many years man has been his sworn enemy, yet he has held his own. That Crows have a language of their own no one who has listened to them will doubt, but who can translate it? In winter, along sea-coasts, they roost in colonies of hundreds and thousands. Early in the morning they start on the day's foraging, and late in the afternoon return to some point near the roost, where they wait the return of the last straggler. Then at a given signal, they all rise and retire for the night.

Note.—In studying the Crow, the following outline from "Nature Study Lessons," by G. A. Cornish, B. A., Lecturer in Science, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, will be found suggestive:

LESSON 1.—THE WISE OLD CROW

1. Introduction
2. Form, Size, and Color
3. Locomotion and Song
4. Food and Economic Importance

THE CROW (POEM)

LESSON 2.—THE CROW—HIS NEST AND HIS WINTER HOME

1. Nesting Habits
2. Migration and General Habits
3. The Crow's Relations

STARLING FAMILY

In "Nature Study Lessons," a splendid little book for use of teachers, complete answers to the above outline may be found, as well as 80 additional lessons, each complete. Illustrated. Publishers.

FRIENDLESS BIRDS

*"O Blackbird! sing me something well;
While all the neighbors shoot thee round,
I keep smooth plats of fruitful ground
Where thou may'st warble, eat, and dwell."*

Blackbirds are closely related to crows but are much smaller. They walk, while most birds hop. The crow both walks and hops.

The *Bronzed Grackle* or *Crow Blackbird* breeds as far north as Labrador, and winters in the lower Mississippi valley. It is about six inches long, and black all over. About the neck, throat, and upper breast the male is a brilliant metallic-purple to bluish-green.

The *Rusty Blackbird* is smaller, and the plumage of the male is a uniform glossy, bluish-black. The female is slate-color in spring, and rusty-brown in autumn and winter.

The *Red-winged Blackbird* is distinguishable by the patch of red and cream on the shoulders in the male. The female is smaller, grayish-brown, and heavily streaked with dark brown or black. Blackbirds are not liked by the farmer. Little can be said in their favor, except that at times they eat a large number of cut-worms. They are early migrants, arriving in Canada in March and resorting at once to their nesting places in swamps or woods. Early in the season they live on insects, but as soon as grain is sown they visit the sown fields and help themselves liberally, varying their diet by robbing the nests of smaller birds and taking as many eggs and young as they can. When strawberries, raspberries, and cherries are ripe they display a fondness for fruit, much to the exasperation of the fruit-grower.

The *Cowbird's* habits are interesting. This is a small bird, about eight inches long, with head, neck and breast coffee-brown, and the rest of the plumage, in the male, glossy black. They are acknowledged villains. They are the only birds that neither make a nest of their own nor care for their young. When a smaller bird, a sparrow, a warbler, or a vireo, is absent from her nest, the cowbird slyly deposits her egg in the nest. The illgotten offspring is born with the cowbird character fully developed. It is strong and gluttonous and gets most of the food which the foster-parents bring, and grows rapidly. The rightful occupants of the nest are starved out

or crowded out of the nest before they mature. Cowbirds have no song. They are much given to following cattle in the pasture, clustering about their feet and feeding on the insects found there—hence the name, cowbird.

BIRDS WHICH DISDAIN BAD FAMILY TRAITS

The *Orioles* and the *Meadowlarks* are relatives of blackbirds and the cowbird, but differ markedly in habits. In walking through grassy fields, meadows or marshes, we sometimes flush rather large, brownish birds, which, alternately flapping and sailing fly away — *this is the Meadowlark*. The white outer tail-feathers show plainly, whether the bird is flying or nervously flitting its tail after it has alighted on a tree or fence. The upper parts are dark in color; a line from the bill over the eye is yellow; a black crescent spans the breast; the throat, breast and upper belly are bright yellow, and the sides and lower belly are whitish, spotted or streaked with black. On the ground it builds its nest, and lays four to six white eggs which are about one inch long and spotted and speckled with brown. The song of the meadowlark is a clear, plaintive whistle of great sweetness. They are familiar friends of hillside and meadow. Their fife-like whistle is often heard in the springtime, while they are perched on a tree top or fence post, as well as their sputtering alarm note when they fly before us.

The *Baltimore Oriole*, sometimes called *Golden Robin*, is loved by all. In his beautiful plumage of orange and black he reminds us of stories of the gorgeous plumage of tropical birds, and seems out of place among the more soberly-clad inhabitants of northern climes. The head, neck, throat and upper back are black, and the breast, belly, and lower back are a rich reddish-orange. It breeds in eastern North America and winters in Central America. The nest of the Baltimore oriole is most interesting. It is made of grasses, plant fibres, hair, strings and bark firmly interwoven, and is hung between two twigs from near the extremity of a limb twenty to forty feet high. The construction work is done by the female, who, though not so brightly plumaged, is a more highly-skilled weaver than the male. The young birds cry ceaselessly for food—a monotonous “dee-dee-dee-dee,” until one of the parents arrives and stops their mouths. This bird is one of the greatest destroyers of hairy caterpillars, and for

this reason is one of the best friends of the orchardist and the forester. The tussock, gipsy, browntail, tent and forest caterpillars, and the fall web-worm are all greedily devoured by this species. For variety, curculios, wasps, bugs, plant-lice, scale insects, and flies are eaten, while cultivated fruit is occasionally eaten as a relish.

The *Orchard Oriole* is not so brightly colored. The head, neck and upper parts are black; the breast, belly and lower back are chestnut. This bird quietly, but with excellent taste, builds its nest of choicest materials. The song, which no words can describe, is a finished effort, in a voice rich and flexible.

THE LIVE DIADEM

The *Ruby-throated Hummingbird* is one of a large family which dares leave warm, sunny, southern regions, and visit northern countries. It is very small, scarcely four inches long, with upper parts bright, shining green; under parts dusky washed with green, and throat a beautiful metallic ruby-red.

*Accuse not nature—she hath done her part;
Do thou but thine.*—MILTON.

The Ruby-throat needs no song. Its beauty gives it distinction, and its wings make music. It seems ever on the wing, now hovering over a bright blossom for a moment and thrusting its long bill into the flower for honey or for insects, then flying away so swiftly that its wings are lost in hazy circles. The nest is of down, covered externally with lichens, and firmly wound with almost invisible plant fibres. The tiny nest, not much over one inch broad, is placed on a limb high above the ground. In it are laid two tiny, white eggs about the size of a pea. Hummingbirds are curious and fearless. They will probe a flower held in one's hand, or fly into houses and feed upon sugar placed on a table. Their food consists largely of minute insects.

*Voyager on golden air,
Type of all that's fleet and fair,
Incarnate gem,
Live diadem
Bird-beam of the summer day,
Whither on your sunny way?*

BIRDS WITH SPECIAL MENU

Cuckoos are to be found in the southern part of the United States and are not common in Canada.

The *Black-billed Cuckoo* is the more common northern species.

The *Yellow-billed Cuckoo* occasionally breeds in Canada. It is a long, slim, dove-like bird, with upper parts brownish gray with a greenish gloss, under parts dull whitish, outer tail-feathers black tipped with white, and the lower mandible yellow. It is distinguishable by its yellow lower mandible, rufous wing-feathers, and black, white-tipped tail-feathers, which marks are absent in the former. The two species are alike in habits. They are insect-eating birds, and are particularly fond of tent-caterpillar larvae. Cuckoos are of quiet and retiring habits, and on account of their mournful notes are often regarded with awe by the superstitious. Their short, rounded wings, and long, broad tails give them a silent, gliding flight. They arrive in Canada and the United States in May or June and leave in September for northern South America. The nests are flat, shabby platforms of twigs placed on the lower branches of trees. The eggs are greenish-blue, and over one inch long.

The *Belted Kingfisher* is found about ponds, lakes and rivers, looking for small fish, which they catch by diving. The upper parts are bluish-gray; the tail-feathers have numerous spots and broken bands of white; the throat, a spot before the eye, and the breast and belly are white; a band across the breast, and the sides are bluish-gray, sometimes tinged with rufous. The nest is built at the end of a two or three-foot tunnel in a sand bank, where five or more glossy white eggs are laid upon the sand. Silently the kingfisher perches on some limb overhanging the water, ever watching for a fish, his only food. Just as you reach the danger line he drops from his perch and with a loud, rattling call flies on ahead.

The *Blue Jay* resembles the kingfisher in size and color, but his habits are quite different. Nearly three-fourths of the food of the blue jay is vegetable matter—seeds, nuts and fruits. One of his many faults is that of eating the eggs and young of other birds. The head is crested; the upper parts are grayish-blue, marked with black and white; a black band passes across the neck, back of the head, and across the breast; the tail is blue, with feathers barred with black and tipped with white. The blue jay is a mimic and a ventriloquist, and delights in teasing other birds. The nest is built in the crotch of a

tree. The four to six pale olive-green eggs, thickly marked with brown, are an inch long.

The *Canada Jay*, named *Whisky-Jack* and *Moose-bird* by lumbermen, is common in northern woods. The fore part of the head is white, the back of the head and nape sooty-black, the back gray, the wings and tail gray, the throat and sides of the neck white, and the under parts ashy-gray. Because of his puffy, gray feathers, and general colors, he resembles a big chickadee. The Canada jay is not so shy as most birds and soon becomes a pet about lumber camps where he feeds on the crumbs of bread and other food thrown out to him. Lumbermen claim that he is very fond of whisky, and they delight in making him "drunk." They nest early in March, while deep snow still covers the ground, and frost reigns supreme in the woods.

TWO BIRDS, GROOMED ALIKE, GO OUT FOR THEIR EVENING MEAL

Whip-poor-will is an interesting bird, often heard in the calm of the evening repeating his name, but not often seen. His colors resemble those of the bark of a tree, black, brown and buff, with touches of white. There is a narrow, white band across the breast, and half of the three outer tail-feathers is white. They breed in eastern North America and winter in Florida. Two dull white eggs, with delicate, obscure lilac markings and a few brownish spots, are laid on the ground among leaves. They are birds of the night, and capture and devour a great number of the large-bodied moths that fly in the woods.

The *Nighthawk* is often confounded with the whip-poor-will, but the latter is easily distinguishable by the long bristles from the base of the bill, the black chin and the rounded tail. In the male nighthawk the throat is white and there is a white band across the tail. The forked tail and the white band across each wing easily distinguishes it at a distance. It lays two, mottled, gray and white eggs on the ground among rocks in pastures. The nighthawk, like the whip-poor-will, passes the day perched lengthwise on a limb; but soon after sunset he mounts high in the air, flies erratically about, at irregular intervals utters a loud nasal peent, and follows it by two or three unusually quick, flitting wing-beats. It is coursing for insects, its principal food.

FLYCATCHERS—BIRDS WHICH DART TO CATCH
PASSING INSECTS

The *Kingbird* is every inch a king! Concealed under the feathers on the head is his crown of orange-red. He dearly loves a fight; and his scientific name, *Tyrannus tyrannus*, recalls the lives of kings of other days. The upper parts are grayish slate-color, the tail black tipped with white, and the under parts white. The nest of grasses and moss, firmly compacted, is placed high up at the end of a branch. The eggs are one inch long, three to five in number, and white, spotted with umber. The kingbird has no love for crows, black-birds, hawks and jays in particular, and should any of these approach his nest they are reminded that other birds have rights which must be respected. He captures a vast number of mature insects and thus renders a great service to the farmer. He is known also as the *Tyrant Flycatcher*.

The *Phoebe* is another flycatcher, with all the food traits of the family. It is not too aggressive, and does no injury in any way. They nest in and about dwellings and under bridges. If unmolested they will return year after year to the same nest. The colors of the upper parts are grayish-brown with an olive-green cast; the crown is greenish-brown; the outer tail-feathers whitish, and the under parts white, washed with yellow, and tinged with brownish-gray on the sides. The bill is black. The phoebe is a devoted parent and is seldom found far from home. There is something familiar, trustful, and homelike in its ways. Perched on a bridge-rail or barnyard gate he contentedly sings his humble, monotonous "pewit phoebe, pewit phoebe."

The *Wood Pewee* is a near relation of the phoebe, and like the latter has gentle, pensive ways voiced by his sad, sweet call. All day long he repeats his name, "pee-a-wee;" and these clear, sympathetic notes come from the canopy of green overhead, during the peace and stillness of the hot mid-day hour when summer heat has silenced more vigorous birds. The upper parts are very dark, the wings and tail greenish-brown and the under parts whitish washed with gray on the sides. He winters in Central America and breeds throughout North America, building a nest of grasses and moss, high up in a tree. One writer says: "I have seen one wood pewee catch and feed to its

young forty-one insects in forty-five minutes." There are several other members of the Flycatcher family.

The *Least Flycatcher* or *Chebec* is one of the smallest and the most common in the north, especially in Canada. Its small size, the comparative absence of yellow on the under parts, and the generally horn-colored or brown lower mandible are the chief distinguishing characteristics. He salutes you with a business-like "chebec, chebec," as he sallies after insects about lawns and orchards, which he prefers to the forest. The nest built in a tree, contains three to five unmarked, white eggs.

The *Crested Flycatcher* is much larger and has a sulphur-yellow belly, and throat and breast of pearl-gray. His note is a loud whistle which pierces far through the clearing, as, full of life and vigor in bright spring days, he flies about in green tree tops, chattering to himself or calling loudly as he goes.

A BIRD WITH NO AMERICAN RELATIVE

The *Horned Lark* is the only representative of the Lark family in America, and it is a winter visitor from northern regions. These hardy birds visit us in flocks, and may be seen running over the snow or barren ground when few birds are about. They take wing with a sharp, whistled note. The forehead, a line over the eye, the ear region, and the throat are sulphur-yellow; the upper parts are grayish-brown; a black patch crosses the breast; the under parts are whitish, and on either side of the head there rises a tuft of elongated feathers resembling a horn.

Note—See Nature Study Lessons, by G. A. Cornish for outlines for use in teaching the subject of birds.—Publishers.

LESSON 25.—THE HORNED LARK

1. Method
2. Colors and Structures
3. Locomotion
4. Feeding Habits

THE HORNED LARK (DRAWING)

LESSON 26.—NEST AND SONG OF THE HORNED LARK

1. Its Song
2. Nesting Habits
3. Migration and Other Habits

STOUT-BILLED BIRDS, FAMOUS FOR THEIR BEAUTY

The *Pine Grosbeak* is another winter visitor from colder, northern regions. The male is slaty-gray, more or less strongly washed with rose-red. In the female, olive-yellow takes the place of the rose-red in the male. Because of a general resemblance to the American robin it is often called the Winter Robin. Its tail is forked, and the beak short and thick. They are very fond of the red berries of sumach, and mountain ash trees also provide them with a nourishing diet.

The *Evening Grosbeak*, which has a black crown, wings and tail, and a yellow forehead, rump and belly, is a hardy and distinguished inhabitant of far northern regions which comes south to Manitoba and Ontario, and the north-western United States in winter time.

The *Rose-breasted Grosbeak* is an occasional summer resident of North America, coming north in early summer from South America. It is a beautiful bird with black head, throat and back, and blood-red breast. Perched on a high tree he will sing for hours a joyous carol of exquisite purity, which seldom fails to appeal to the sympathies, and arouse the enthusiasm of those whose ears are usually deaf to the music of the birds. There is no mistaking the male in his black, white and rose costume; but the sparrow-like costume of his mate may not attract attention.

The *Purple Finch* is quite small. The male has the entire body suffused with rose-red, but the female bears a decided resemblance to a sparrow, except for the rounded bill, the tufts of feathers over the nostrils, and the forked tail. The purple finch is a garden bird very fond of fruit blossoms and buds. Its full song is a sweet-toned, carelessly-flowing warble which bursts forth as if from a happy heart, particularly when he wishes to attract the attention and win the love of a demure female. It nests in conifers, and lays four to six blue eggs which are spotted with brown about the larger end.

The little *Redpoll* with his bright red crown, grayish-brown back, and pinkish breast, is one best known as a winter visitor. It comes from the north in flocks in search of food. It is affectionate and confiding, easily tamed, and makes an interesting pet.

The *Snow Bunting* or *Snowflake* comes south in great flocks, when the chill season comes on in icy regions, and forages about barnyards

and bare fields. They must find enough to eat, because they are always very fat and in good health and spirits. The whole head, neck, rump and under parts are white; with some black on the wings and tail. As long as the snow lasts the snowflakes stay; but when warm, sunny days in spring arrive they betake themselves to far northern regions and there build their nests.

The *Pine Siskin* is another bird of the north which comes south in winter. The upper parts are streaked with black and buff; the wings and tail are greenish-brown with yellow markings which serve to distinguish it.

The *American Goldfinch* or *Thistle-bird*, a northern summer resident, winters in the United States and the warmer parts of Canada. It is held in high esteem, enjoyed by few other birds. The adult male is bright yellow with black cap, wings and tail. The female is olive-green all over. As they bound through the air in undulating paths their joyous nature is expressed by the canary-like song which speaks of the wilds of nature and of a happy life. They are seed-eating birds, and may often be seen swinging from the ripened heads of a dandelion or a thistle, and eating the tufted seeds. The nest of grass and moss, thickly lined with down, is placed in a bush or tree, and contains three to six pale bluish-white eggs, not much over one-half inch long. When the young birds are placed in a cage, hung from the tree at first and moved a few feet each day toward the house, the parent birds will feed them until they are old enough to eat the food given canaries. They do well in captivity, the male in spring putting on his coat of yellow and black and singing his joyous song. The writer kept one for eleven years. It died evidently of old age.

The following is from the index of Finches, in the *New Canadian Bird Book*, by W. T. MacClement, M. A., D. Sc., Professor, Queen's University. This book gives concise sketches of all Canadian birds. Dominion Book Company, Toronto.

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COLOR KEY TO THE SPARROWS

- 1A. Crown reddish-brown.
 1B. Throat and breast not streaked.
 1C. Plain light-gray; white line on the eye; small—1. *Chipping Sparrow*.
 2C. Plain ashy-gray; no wing-bars; much reddish-brown on the wings; (found about water)—2. *Swamp Sparrow*.
 3C. Plain ashy-gray; distinct white wing-bars; black spot on breast—3. *Tree Sparrow*.
 4C. Plain ashy-gray; buff wing-bars; flesh-colored—4. *Field Sparrow*.
- 2A. Crown brown or ashy-brown.—(Plumage much streaked above and below, with distinct streaks on the sides of the throat, and a blotch in the middle of the breast).
 1B. Streaks brown and black—5. *Song Sparrow*.
 2B. Streaks reddish-brown—6. *Fox Sparrow*.
- 3A. Crown distinctly streaked.
 1B. With white and black streaks on crown.
 1C. A white patch on the throat; a yellow line in front of the eye—7. *White-throated Sparrow*.
 2C. Throat and breast gray—8. *White-crowned Sparrow*.
 2B. With faint buff streak through the crown, and a yellow streak over the eye; breast and sides of throat dashed with brownish-black—9. *Savanna Sparrow*.
- 4A. Shows white outer tail-feathers when flying.
 1B. Brownish-colored—10. *Vesper Sparrow*.
 2B. Slate-colored—11. *Junco*.

See the New Canadian Bird Book, by Dr. W. T. MacClement, Professor, Queen's University, for concise sketches of the following sparrows. The list is from the index of that book.—Publishers.

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OUR NATIVE SPARROWS

The *Finches* and the *Sparrows* constitute the largest family of North American birds, represented in Canada by over thirty species and in the United States by more. The sparrows, commonly called "gray birds," are common about roadsides and farms during the summer months. In general they build on or near the ground, and are brown in coloring. Their food consists chiefly of insects. During the summer and early autumn the young are fed on insects, and as there are two or three broods each season, this means a vast number of insects taken from crops. When the breeding season is over, sparrows gather into flocks and may be found in large numbers in weed patches left about the farm. As winter comes on they leave for the south. Many species take high rank as songsters; and a quiet sojourn in the country, or a drive along country roads, or a tramp through the woods, would be dull indeed without the clear notes of the Song Sparrow, or the cheery, patriotic song of the White-throated Sparrow, which seems to say: "I love dear Canada, Canada, Canada."

The *Song Sparrow*, already referred to, is one of the best singers of early spring, and tells us that the winter is past. He strikes three or four strong notes and then runs down the scale.

*"A joyful flourish lilted clear—
Four notes—then fails the frolic song,
And memories of a vanished year,
The wistful cadences prolong;
'A vanished year—O heart too sore—
I cannot sing:' thus ends the lay;
Long silence, then awakes once more
His song ecstatic of the May."*

The crown is brownish, and the breast is marked with wedge-shaped spots of black and brown which tend to form one larger blotch at the center. Its vivacious song may be heard by night as well as by day, and in all weathers; and though not a sociable species it is one of the best known of all sparrows. It nests on the ground or in bushes, and lays four to five white or bluish-white eggs with brown markings.

The *Vesper Sparrow* much resembles the song sparrow, but is distinguished by two outer, white tail-feathers which show when it

flies. It is a spring migrant in northern America, wintering on the Atlantic coast and breeding in Canada. While walking along a country road, the vesper sparrow will run rapidly ahead of you, wait for you to catch up, then run ahead again. His song is clear, loud and ringing. It is sweeter and more plaintive than that of the song sparrow, and sounds best as the evening shadows gather.

The *Savanna Sparrow* has no distinctive marks except pale yellow lines over or before the eye and on the bend of the wing. It is a common bird by roadsides and in the fields, and chirps vigorously at every passer-by as it bobs up and down on fence-posts. Its song is a weak, musical trill most audible toward sunset.

The *Swamp Sparrow* is distinguished by its unstreaked breast and characteristic song—a simple, sweet, monotonous "tweet tweet," repeated many times. It is rarely seen beyond the confines of a wet meadow or grassy marsh.

The *Fox Sparrow*, which is foxy-red all over, and larger than the other species, is seen in early spring about damp thickets and roadside shrubbery foraging among the dead leaves. Its song is not surpassed by that of any of the sparrows. One may be sauntering along wooded fields enjoying the balmy air of evening, when he is halted by a beautiful, new song. It is a solo at first—an emotional outburst rising full toned and clear, and passing all too quickly to a closing cadence which seems to linger in the silent, evening air. Then, of a sudden, the solo is succeeded by a chorus—from every side, and from a hundred throats, comes the same sweet melody—the music of the fox sparrows.

The *White-throated Sparrow* or "*Olâ Tom Peabody*" is found throughout North America and is the national song bird of Canada.

"Shy bird of the silver arrows of song,
That cleave our northern air so clear,
Thy notes prolong, prolong;
I listen, I hear—

'I-love-dear-Canada-Canada-Canada!'

Shy bird of the silver arrows of song,
Shy poet of Canada dear,
Thy notes prolong, prolong;
We listen, we hear—

'I-love-dear-Canada-Canada-Canada!'

The center of the crown has a white stripe bordered on either side by much wider black stripes, and a white stripe passes from the eye backward along the side of the head. The throat is marked by a square, white patch. While feeding on the ground near their haunts, there is little in their modest appearance to tell one of their vocal powers; but suddenly a clear, sweet, plaintive song arrests one's attention, and we listen to the patriotic words of Canada's national song bird.

The *Chipping Sparrow* is the smallest of all the sparrows—so small that sometimes it hangs itself accidentally with a horse hair used in lining its nest. The top of the head is reddish-brown, the under parts nearly white, and the bill black. It is the humblest, most unassuming member of the family, making its nest in the vines about our porches, and feeding on the crumbs about our doorsteps. Its song is a monotonous "chippy," often repeated.

The *Winter Chippy* or *Tree Sparrow* is larger than the chipping sparrow, and in addition to the size is distinguished by an almost indistinct black spot on the centre of the breast. They come in flocks from the North when fields are beginning to look brown and dreary, and feed on the seeds of weeds and grasses. In spring they begin singing a low, sweet, canary-like song.

The *Junco* is welcome in early spring days, even though dressed in sober colors and with a song seldom heard, and we must not leave the sparrow family without referring to this common bird. It is slate-color above, white below, with flesh-color bill, and white outer tail-feathers. The "tsip" of the junco is known to all, but few have heard his low, sweet song, which is as unpretentious and cheery as the bird itself.

A EUROPEAN IMMIGRANT

The *English Sparrow* was first introduced into the United States in 1850, when eight pairs were brought from England to Brooklyn. Now the bird is common in all parts of America, and has become a nuisance. There is nothing attractive in its plumage. The male is marked by a black blotch on the throat, and white cheeks. Its note is guttural and harsh. In Europe it is a beneficial insect destroyer; in America it is a pest. They are amazingly hardy and prolific. One of the most serious faults of the English sparrow is that it drives away the useful, native birds from our orchards and

gardens; and its incessant, noisy chattering is heard instead of the sweet and pleasing songs of other birds such as finches, native sparrows, bluebirds, orioles and vireos. It is true that the young are fed with insects, but the evil that the sparrow does is much greater than the good.

VALUABLE ARBOREAL BIRDS—THE VIREOS

The *Vireos* are small, insect-eating birds, slow in their movements, and lovers of trees, where they secure their food from crevices in the bark or from the under side of leaves.

The *Red-eyed Vireo* is the most common species in Canada and the United States. It has a slaty-gray crown bordered on either side by black, a white line over the eye, under parts pure white, and upper parts olive-green. The conspicuous white line over the eye, with its black border, and the bird's red eyes, distinguish it from its relations. It is a northern summer resident, wintering in Central America. All through the spring and summer months their warble is heard from woodland and roadside, often becoming monotonous. It is delivered in parts, with intermissions of a few seconds between, from morning until night. He is called the "*Preacher*," because he explains his subject in a few words and then makes a pause for his hearers to reflect upon it. Translated, his sermon is: "You see it; you know it; do you hear me? do you believe it?" All these strains are delivered with a rising inflection at the close, and with a pause as if waiting for an answer.

The *Warbling Vireo* is olive-green above, with no black border on the crown. The under parts are white, slightly washed with yellow. It breeds as far north as Hudson Bay, and winters in the tropics. Its song is a firm, rich, continuous warble.

The *Yellow-throated Vireo* has bright olive-green upper parts, a white belly, and eye-ring and throat and breast bright yellow. It is a dweller in tree-tops, and its tune is deeper, richer and more deliberate than that of the Red-eyed. He calls: "See me; I'm here; where are you?"

THE MIMIC

*"From the coverts of the thicket comes a wondrous burst of song;
Tripping gaily, pressing, crowding, flood the liquid notes along!
'Tis the catbird, dear old Orpheus, with a heart as full of joy
As our quaint old Quaker poet, or his whistling bare-foot boy."*

The Catbird is one of the most intelligent of birds. As the trees come into leafage in May, catbirds and thrashers fill the air with their delightful songs. We close the eyes and give the ears full enjoyment. The catbird, so-called because he can "mew" like a cat, is inclined to be friendly to man, and where he is well treated and his confidence won, will show himself delightfully familiar, coming around the veranda, answering one's talk, and singing for our entertainment. He is a charming singer. The song seems to be made up as he goes along. It is an indescribable medley interspersed with various mews and calls. His general color is dark gray, with a black cap, and chestnut under the tail-coverts. He is nine inches long. The nest is found in hedges or thickets and is made of twigs, rootlets and grass, lined with fine black roots. The four eggs are plain greenish-blue. The catbird knows his rights, and knowing, dares maintain them. The old birds are valiant defenders of the nest, and the mother bird is one of the most anxious and devoted. If her nest is discovered she exhibits so much distress that many birds, and even dogs, are attracted to her assistance. In general, catbirds are lively, playful, full of pranks and quaint performances, and should be encouraged about our homes.

*"Dear, merry mocker, your mimic art
Makes drowsy Grimalkin awake with a start,
And peer all around with a puzzled air—
For who would suppose that one would dare
To mimic the voice of a mortal foe!
You're safe on the bough, as well you know,
And if ever a bird could laugh 'tis you,
Drawling, 'Mi-ow, mi-ew.'"*

A WELL GROOMED VISITOR

The *Cedar Waxwing*, often called *Cedar-bird* or *Cherry-bird*, is the most polite and the best groomed of all birds. The forehead, chin, and a line through the eye, are velvety black; the head, and the upper parts are a rich grayish-brown, with small, red, sealing-wax tips on some of the wing feathers; the belly is yellowish, and the tail has a yellow band at its end. The nest is placed in a fruit or shade tree, and the eggs are bluish-gray spotted with umber. The cedar waxwing is a common summer resident of Canada and northern United States. Though very beautiful, and an insect destroyer to a certain extent, it unobdubtly consumes a large number of cherries and currants and a few raspberries. They are very tame, and allow anyone to almost touch them while they are feeding. The note is an insignificant hiss. Their beauty, and their gentle, refined ways, make them seem superior creatures of the air whom we must respect.

THE BUTCHER-BIRD AND THE LOGGERHEAD

The *Northern Shrike* or *Butcher-bird* is a hawk-like, blood-thirsty bird which preys on small birds, field-mice and noxious insects. It is a bird ten inches long, with gray, black, and white the prevailing colors. They are unable, because of the structure of their feet, to hold their prey while they eat it, so they impale it upon thorns or barbs and tear it to pieces with their hooked bills, hence the name butcher-bird. The song consists of various whistles. They have their rude, bulky nests of twigs and weeds in thorny trees; and lay four to six grayish white, spotted eggs over an inch long. Shrikes are cruel and rapacious, and are not held in high esteem.

The *Loggerhead Shrike* has black upper parts and white under parts, and its habits are in general like those of the northern shrike. His notes are harsh and unmusical.

HIGHLY INSECTIVOROUS BIRDS—THE SWALLOWS

COLOR KEY TO SWALLOWS

- 1A. Upper parts with metallic reflections.
- 1B. Under parts, steel-blue.
- 1C. Feathers on belly brownish at the base—1. *Purple Martin* (M)
- 2B. Throat chestnut, or brownish.
- 1C. Upper tail-coverts steel-blue; tail with white spots, and deeply forked—2. *Barn Swallow*.
- 2C. Upper tail-coverts brownish or buff—3. *Cliff Swallow*.
- 3B. Throat gray or white.

- 1C. Entire under parts white—4. *Tree Swallow* (M)
- 2C. Throat and breast brownish-gray—1. *Purple Martin* (F)
- 2A. Upper parts without metallic reflections.
 - 1B. Under parts entirely white—4. *Tree Swallow* (Young)
 - 2B. Throat and belly white; a brownish-gray band across the breast—5. *Bank Swallow*.

The *Swallows* are denizens of the air. It is their domain, and it contains their food. In structure they are especially adapted for their life, having long wings, small feet, and short, broad, deeply-cleft bills fitted for catching insects. They are highly insectivorous, and are therefore of great benefit to man.

The *Barn Swallow* has upper parts of dark blue, forehead, throat and upper breast chestnut, lower breast and belly buff, and a deeply-forked tail showing white markings when spread. It builds a nest of mud and grass lined with grasses and feathers, and fastens it on the rafter or beam of a barn or other building. The eggs are white with numerous brownish spots. Barn swallows rank first among a family of birds famous for their power of flight. In search for insects they skim low over the fields, turn quickly to right or left, up or down, and pursue their marvelous course with ease and grace. One writer says: "There is no evil blended with the benefits they confer upon man."

The *Bank Swallow* has brownish-gray upper parts, a white throat, and a brownish-gray band on the breast. It builds a nest of grasses and feathers in a hole in a sand bank two or three feet from the entrance. They are generally known from other swallows by their small size, absence of metallic covering, and their nesting habits.

The *Cliff* or *Eaves Swallow* has a whitish forehead, steel-blue crown and back, chestnut throat and sides of head, brownish-gray breast, and greenish-brown tail feathers of nearly equal length. Its nest is of mud, pocket-shaped with an opening at one side above, and fastened beneath a cliff or the eaves of a barn. The birds will return year after year to their rows of mud tenements.

The *Tree Swallow* has upper parts of gray-green or steel-blue, under parts of white, and the tail slightly notched. They build nests of grasses and feathers in the hollow of a tree, or they may accept as substitutes for the tree the boxes erected by man.

The *Purple Martin* is the best known of the swallows and occupies houses or boxes erected for its use, if the English sparrow has not already taken possession of these before the martin arrives in late spring. The male is shining blue-black, with wings and tail duller. Martins not only drive away hawks which are after chickens, but they eat many injurious insects, beetles in particular, for which they have a great fondness.

The *Chimney Swift* closely resembles the swallows in its habits, except that it never alights on the ground even to obtain the materials for its curiously constructed nest placed on the inside wall of a chimney. These birds are smoke-colored; and spines on the end of each tail-feather enable them to hang to the upright walls of the soot-lined chimney. The nest is made of twigs glued to each other and to the side of the chimney by the bird's saliva. The three to five white eggs are long and narrow. Throughout the day numbers of swifts are scouring the air for their fare of insects; but as night approaches they return to the chimney, where there is a continuous and not unmusical twittering day and night.

EVER HAPPY BIRDS OF THE EVERGREENS

The *Kinglets* are small birds. Though very small they are active, hardy little birds, and always seem to be happy.

The *Golden-crowned Kinglet* has the center of the crown bright, reddish-orange, bordered by yellow and black, with upper parts olive-green and under parts whitish. It builds a very small, hanging nest of mosses, bark and feathers, high up in a tree, and lays nine or ten tiny eggs. Its song consists of a few weak chips or chirps and trills.

The *Ruby-crowned Kinglet* has a partly concealed crest of bright red. The kinglets are usually seen flitting about evergreens. They breed in Canada and mountainous sections of the United States, where they remain during mild winters, but during severe weather they winter in Mexico.

A MUSICAL AND INDUSTRIOUS FAMILY

The *Brown Thrasher* calls from his lookout: "Shuck it, shuck it; sow it, sow it; plough it, plough it; hoe it, hoe it." His song is a bright, cheerful carol, often long continued, but always clear and sweet. Above, it is bright reddish brown; below, it is white with black

spots, and the length is about one foot. He is an inhabitant of shrubbery and borders of woods where he passes much time on the ground scratching among the fallen leaves. He is active, shy, and suspicious and does not like to be watched. The brown thrasher is a finished musician with rich tones and exact execution. Morning and evening, mounted on the upper branches of a tree, he pours forth his song in a way which appeals to the heart and to the mind.

Wrens are of the Thrasher family but are diminutive in size.

The *House Wren* breeds in southern Canada and the United States. It is brownish above, with tail and wings barred; dull gray below, barred on the flanks with brown. They are bold, sociable, confiding little birds, building their nests in bird-boxes erected for them. They feed wholly on insects and are therefore beneficial. The song is loud and clear and bubbles with enthusiasm.

The *Winter Wren* breeds in northern Canada and winters southward to the Gulf of Mexico. It is bright cinnamon above, paler below, with sides, wings, and tail heavily barred with black. This is the shortest and most stoutly built of wrens, and looks very pert with its stubby tail erect over the back. They nest in brush heaps, tin cans, or in hollow stumps. The nest is lined with feathers, and the little eggs are white, sparingly speckled with reddish-brown.

COLOR KEY TO THE THRUSHES

- 1A. Head and nape bright reddish-brown; breast and sides with large black spots—*Wood Thrush*.
- 2A. Throat and breast spotted; tail bright reddish-brown; (tail habitually slowly raised and lowered)—*Hermit Thrush*.
- 3A. Whole upper parts a uniform reddish-brown; breast lightly spotted—*Wilson's Thrush* or *Veery*.
- 4A. Upper parts a uniform olive.
 - 1B. Cheek, throat and breast washed with tan—*Olive-backed Thrush*.
 - 2B. Little or no tan on cheeks, throat or breast—*Gray-cheeked Thrush*.
 - 3B. Similar to preceding, but with brighter colors (always smaller than preceding)—*Bicknell's Thrush*.

BEST BIRD MUSICIANS

The *Thrushes* are conceded first rank among song-birds by all true lovers of music.

Wilson's Thrush or *Veery* has the entire upper parts a uniform reddish-brown. Below, it is a dirty white with a few faint marks on the breast. It is found in swamps, and in dry woods. The nest is

on the ground and made of strips of bark and leaves. The eggs are greenish-blue. He is shy and retiring and lives near the ground. All the wondrous mysteries of the woods find a voice in his song. It is a weird, ringing monotone of blended alto and soprano notes. It has neither break nor pause, nor does it seem to come from any one place. In fact he is a ventriloquist, and has led many a bird-lover a weary tramp in searching for him on different trees while he has not moved from his perch. His song is like the syllables "vee-r-hu" repeated eight or nine times around a series of intertwining circles.

The *Wood Thrush* is distinguished from other thrushes by its larger size, its brighter cinnamon color above, and the numerous large, round, black spots on its under parts. His song is very clear and flute-like, containing many notes of the scale; and as it rings through the woods like a hymn of praise it invites one to yield to the ennobling influences of Nature.

The *Hermit Thrush* has a reddish-brown tail much brighter than the back and head, and a breast quite heavily spotted with black. When migrating it does not sing; but in its summer home in the woods, where it finds seclusion, it pours forth a song which in purity and sweetness of tone, and in exquisite modulation, touches the very highest chords of bird music.

The *Olive-backed Thrush*, *Bicknell's Thrush*, and other species are summer residents in Canada and the United States, and are quite similar to those described.

"Of all the chaps who come with spring,	He greets you too, as you pass by,
I love dear Robin best;	With such a note of joy,—
He is the first to sing his song,	I do believe he has a heart
The first the build his nest;	Exactly like a boy."

The *American Robin*, which is abundant about farms and dwellings in all parts of Canada and the United States, is the best-known and most beloved of all the thrushes. His loud, cheery carol, "cheerily-cheerup, cheerily-cheerup," repeated many times, is welcomed in the early spring, and tells us that the winter is past.

*"The Robin in the cherry tree
Is blithe as any bird can be;
And bubbling from his silver throat,
His wordless songs of rapture float—
O happy, happy May."*

The robin is about ten inches long, much longer than the little Robin Red-breast of England which is not a thrush. The male has a black head, reddish-brown breast, and drab upper parts. The female has duller colors. The nest is of coarse grasses and rootlets with an inner wall of mud and lining of fine grasses, and may be found in shade trees or on a veranda beam. She lays three to five greenish blue eggs about one inch long. The young are fed on larvae, chiefly cut-worms, and in this way robins do a great work. It is true they may help themselves to cherries and strawberries from the farmer's garden; but otherwise they do little damage, and none would wish to miss their cheery songs.

The *Southern Robin*, found in extreme south-eastern United States, is paler in color.

The *Bluebird* is another thrush which makes itself at home in our orchards and gardens, and occupies the cozy bird-house in the apple tree. "The robin, the forerunner of the spring, the bluebird with his jocund caroling." Twenty years ago the bluebird was one of the most abundant of our summer residents but now it is not so common. It may be they go to more northern unsettled districts where they can still find "snake" fences and stumps in the pastures. It is cobalt-blue above, cinnamon-red below, with a white belly. Its disposition is typical of all that is sweet and amiable. The song is a continued sweet warble, and breathes of love; and the sad notes, as he passes southward, tell us more plainly than the fallen leaves that the year is dying. It winters in southern United States.

A LARGE FAMILY OF SMALL BIRDS WITH NO EUROPEAN RELATIVES

The *Wood Warblers* are found only in America, and of the one hundred species known, about thirty visit as far north as Canada. With few exceptions they are inhabitants of the woods, but may be found in the trees of lawns and orchards. They are among the last of the northern spring arrivals, and the first to leave in autumn. Like the flycatchers, their food is chiefly insects. Some look for these on leaves or bark, while some capture a large part of their food on the wing. All are small. Many are among our brightest colored and most interesting birds. None of them are remarkable as songsters. All through the summer they are actively engaged in exterminating the hosts of our smaller insect enemies, and many thousands of broods

of caterpillars are destroyed by them before they are large enough to do mischief.

The *Yellow Warbler* or *Summer Yellowbird* is the most familiar of all because of its canary-like plumage, and because it nests in the trees and shrubbery about the home. The upper parts are bright greenish-yellow; the under parts are bright yellow streaked with brown. The female is uniformly yellowish olive-green. Its nest of fine grasses and fibres is lined with down. The tiny eggs are bluish-white, thickly marked with brown. Its bright colors, and its pleasing though simple song, a happy "wee-chee, chee, chee, cher-wee," add to the attractions of the rural home.

The *Oven-bird* is one of the commonest and the most interesting of the woodland warblers. The crown is orange-brown, bordered by black, the upper parts olive-green, and the under parts white, with the sides of the throat, breast and sides streaked with black. Flying up from the ground, he cautiously hops from branch to branch, walks carefully along a limb, and then suddenly "bursts forth into a wild outpouring of intricate and melodious song," which vibrates through the woods as in rising tones it seems to say, "teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher." The bird quivers with the violence of his effort at song, the very force of which carries him up into the air among the tree-tops.

COLOR KEY TO WARBLERS

GROUP I.—BLUE CONSPICUOUS IN PLUMAGE

1. *Cerulean Warbler*—Bright, light-blue above; pure white below, with a narrow blue line across the breast; wing-bars white. Not common in Canada.
2. *Connecticut Warbler*—Head, throat and breast bluish-gray; a white eye-ring; back and tail olive; belly yellow; note a loud and ringing "wee-wichit, wee-wichit, wee-wichit." Common.
3. *Nashville Warbler*—Head and neck blue-gray above; back and tail olive-yellow; under parts plain yellow. Male with a brown patch on crown. Common.
4. *Tennessee Warbler*—Above parts same as in Nashville; below parts grayish-white, and grayer on the sides. Common.

GROUP II.—BLACK CONSPICUOUS IN PLUMAGE

1. *Black and White-striped Creeping Warbler*—All the body striped with black and white. Common.
2. *Black-throated Blue Warbler*—Dusky-blue above, with white triangle on the side of wing; throat, breast and sides black. Common.

3. *Black-throated Green Warbler*—Cheeks yellow; throat black in male; wing-bars white. Common.
4. *Black-poll Warbler*—Whole crown black, with white patches below the eyes, resembling a collar; middle-throat and breast white. Common.
5. *Mourning Warbler*—Whole head and neck blue-gray; back and tail olive; breast black; belly clear yellow. Common.

GROUP III—REDDISH-BROWN CONSPICUOUS IN PLUMAGE

1. *Red-poll, or Palm Warbler*—Crown red; throat yellow, with a line over the eye; wags the tail. Common.
2. *Chestnut-sided Warbler*—Sides chestnut, bordering the pure white under parts; crown yellow; black line through eye and on side of throat. Common.
3. *Bay-breasted Warbler*—Crown, throat, and sides reddish-brown. Common.

GROUP IV—ORANGE CONSPICUOUS IN PLUMAGE

1. *Redstart*—Male with orange-red bars on wings, rump and sides; in female pale yellow replaces orange. Very active. Common.
2. *Blackburnian Warbler*—Throat and breast rich orange; wings and tail black and white; male black above, with large white patch on wings. Common.
3. *Prothonotary Warbler*—Clear, unstriped, light orange-yellow all over except wings and tail are blue-gray. Not common in Canada.
4. *Oven-bird*—Crown orange-brown, bordered by black; under parts light with lines of orange spots. Its song is "teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher," gathering strength with each syllable. Not common in Canada.

GROUP V—YELLOW CONSPICUOUS IN PLUMAGE

1. *Yellow Warbler*—*Summer Yellowbird*—Yellow all over, with reddish-brown stripes on breast. Common summer resident in Canada.
2. *Myrtle Warbler*—Patch of yellow on rump, crown, and on each side of breast. First warbler to migrate to northern regions in the spring and the last to leave in the autumn. Common.
3. *Magnolia Warbler*—Crown blue; rump yellow; yellow below, dashed with black. Male with black ear-patch, back, and necklace. Common.
4. *Canadian Warbler*—Dark-gray above; yellow below, with a band of black dashes across the breast. Common.
5. *Wilson's Warbler*—Yellow below; olive above; crown black. Common.
6. *Yellow-breasted Chat*—Throat and breast clear lemon-yellow; belly white; olive-gray above. The largest of the warblers. Occasional as far north as Canada.
7. *Cape May Warbler*—Yellow below, with many black dashes all over; brown or olive-brown above; a bright yellow collar; ears buff. Not common in Canada.
8. *Nashville Warbler*—Plain yellow below; back and tail olive-yellow; head and neck blue-gray—Common.

9. *Palm Warbler—Redpoll—Wagtail*—Throat and a line over the eye yellow; crown red; continually wags the tail. Common.
10. *Maryland Yellow-throat*—Back olive; throat yellow; broad black band across forehead and down through the eyes to the sides of the throat. Common.
11. *Parula Warbler*—Upper-throat yellow; lead-colored bar across lower throat; upper breast brownish-yellow; lower breast clear yellow; belly white; lead-blue above, with olive patch on back. Common.
12. *Pine Warbler*—Greenish-yellow above, and brighter below; outer tail-feathers and two wing-bars white. Not common.

*"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar;
I love not man the less but nature more
From these our interviews in which I steal
From what I may be or have been before,
To look upon the universe and feel
What I can ne'er express but cannot all conceal."*